

24 5247
A
DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A
BAPTIST

AND A
CHURCH-MAN.

Occasion'd by the BAPTISTS Opening a
New MEETING-HOUSE, for Reviving
Old Calvinistical Doctrines, and Spread-
ing *Antinomian*, and other Errors
at BIRMINGHAM in *Warwickshire*.

PART I.

By a *Consistent Christian*.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. ROBERTS at the *Oxford-Arms*
in *Warwick-Lane*.

M,DCC,XXXVII.

(*Price Six-pence.*)



Errors of the Press.

PAge 9. line 4. for *Means*, read *Men's*. Line ult for *Spead*, r. *Spread*.
 p. 12. l. 5. for *or*, r. *and*. l. ult but one for *a* r. *and*. p. 13. l. 15.
 for *will*, r. *well*. p. 17. l. 5. for *Prator*, r. *Prater*. p. 20. l. 18. for
now, r. *when*. l. ult but one dele *not*. p. 21. l. 27. for *that*, r. *thus*. p.
 23. l. 5. for *on*, r. *an*. p. 24. l. 29. for *Love*, r. *Law*. p. 25. l. 9. for
Races, r. *Race*. p. 28. l. 21. r. *condemn Men* &c. p. 30. l. 8. for
sensibly as soon at you, r. *sensibly, as soon as they*, &c. p. 34. l. 23. for
and wonder, r. *and I wonder*. p. 37. l. 13. r. *impute it to*, &c. p. 38. l.
 ult r. *the most glaring*, &c. p. 41. l. 4. for *outword*, r. *outward*. l. 19:
 add after *Sprinkling*, *the twelve Pillars serv'd instead of sprinkling the*
whole, &c. l. 21. for *Tasteing* r. *Tasting*. p. 42. l. 5. for *to*, r. *so*. p.
 44. l. 29. for *and too*, r. *and are too*, &c.



A
DIALOGUE
 BETWEEN A
New BAPTIST
 AND A
CHURCH-MAN.

PART. I.

Bapt.



ELL, Friend, what think you now of our Preachers?

C. They seem to have a deal of Fervour, and what you call Zeal; and I hope are honest Men and mean well; but truly I think 'em

a little touch'd in their Heads, and are going into a Distemper call'd by Physicians *Religious Madness*.

B

B. I

B. I am sorry, Friend, you shou'd take in such an Opinion of them; for I judge them to be not only good Men, but to be endowed with a large Measure of the *Spirit of God*.

C. The Spirit of God is a Wise, Calm, reasonable Spirit; and the Author of none but wise and reasonable Discourses, Gestures and Actions. I hope you will not charge their Grimaces, Gesticulations, bodily Heats, weak and rash Speeches and strange Doctrines on the Spirit of God; nor any thing that is false and absurd, Uncharitable or Ridiculous.

B. I acknowledge the Spirit which is *from above* is wise, gentle, meek and mild, charitable and kind; yet we read of very odd Things the Prophets of God did when filled by his Spirit, and animated by holy Zeal.

C. What *Jewish* Prophets did in an Age and Country when and where it was customary to teach Men by Types, Figures and Signs is not to be drawn into Imitation by Christians.

Nor do we find that the Apostles and first Preachers, sent out by Christ, practised any such Things. And the Discourses of the Prophets and of Christ and his Apostles are wise, calm, charitable, just and strong. Nor can I think their Behaviour was any way odd, scenical and antick, such as becomes a Stage rather than the Pulpit *.

Be-

* I have heard of the Extatical Grimaces, writhen Limbs, heaving Breasts, swelled Bellies, and other convulsive Motions of the Sybils, Pythoneses, the Dæmon Priests and Prophetesses amongst the *Gentiles*.

Deus ecce, deus! cui talia fanti

Ante fores subito, non vultus, non color unus,

Non comptæ mansere comæ, sed pectus anhelum,

Et rabie fera corda tument. —————

At

Besides, your Preachers give not the least Proof that they have more of the Spirit of God than other Men.

B. You know that by the Foolishness of Preaching God saveth Souls, and chooseth weak Things to confound the Mighty.

C. There is a wide difference between *foolish Preaching*, and the *Foolishness of Preaching*. The Gentile Philosophers and Wise Men called all Preaching of the heavenly Doctrines of a crucified Saviour *Foolishness*, even the rational and noble Sermons of *Peter*, *Stephen* and *Paul*. But was *Paul* to rise from the Dead and hear at what a rate your Ministers murdered and mangled the Gospel of his Master, he wou'd call it *foolish Preaching*.

B. If God convert Souls by it, this will justify it against all your Satyr.

C. May not a Friend say, if God convert Souls by *Humms* and *Hawings*, by broad Hats and Coats cut to the Quick, and by silent Meetings, will not this justify them?

Conversion is the change of Men's Hearts and Lives, and their Living according to the Gospel; which is quite another Thing, and far better than raising the Passions, striking the Imaginations of weak Women and Enthusiastick Men.

*At Phæbi nondum patiens immanis in antro,
Bacchatur Vates, magnum si Pectore possit
Excussisse Deum: tanto magis ille fatigat
Os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.*

Virg. Æn. vi. v. 46. 77.

Besides

Besides, what Aptitude have bodily Motions, wry Faces, distorted Limbs, and tuneful Non-sense to convert Souls?

B. I hope you wou'd not have our Preachers to stand stock still in the Pulpit, and deliver their Sermons like so many speaking Posts. I love to see and hear a Man talk with Life and Concern, as if he was in Earnest.

C. I do not like *wooden Preachers* any better than you. But great is the Difference between the silly Motions and Gestures, Screwings and Tones of your Preachers; and that Action and Gesture which carrieth Dignity in it, and which becometh the Awfulness of the Gospel Doctrine, and the Gravity of the Pulpit.

Tho' I approve of neither, yet I had rather see a *Statue* in the Pulpit than a *Jack-pudding* or a *Merry-Andrew*: As I had rather see People *asleep* under a dull Sermon, than *laughing* at the ridiculous Behaviour of the Preacher.

B. You represent our Preachers as a parcel of Fools, I think very unjustly; and that you mistake the Fruits of the Spirit of God, for the Effects of Folly and Enthusiasm.

C. Your Preachers may have common Sense upon other Subjects and in other Places, but they seem to leave it all behind them when they get into the Pulpit, and begin to talk Divinity. And if I am mistaken in 'em, I cannot help it. My Reason and the Gospel tell me, That the Fruits of the Spirit are Wisdom, Prudence, Meekness, Goodness, strong Arguments, warm Perswasions, Sincerity of Heart and Beneficence of Life; such as we find in the Life and Sermons of *St. Paul*,
and

and of his Master *Jesus Christ*.---Not bodily Passions and Postures, wild and furious Zeal, Uncharitable Censures, damnatory Sentences, and Unscriptural Doctrines.

B. You run on to great Lengths; if some of our Preachers are not quite so prudent and modest as we cou'd wish 'em; I am sure they are very *sound* Preachers, and *orthodox* Divines, and on this Score we value 'em.

C. In *your* Sense every Man is found and *orthodox* who preaches up the *Calvinistick Scheme* delivered in the *Assemblies Confession* and *Catechisms*; or who perhaps publish the gross Errors of Dr. *Crisp*, and other *Antinomian* Writers.

But in the Judgment of *God* every Man is found and orthodox, who is *upright, sincere* and *good*; that is, who seeks the Truth with all his Heart, and lives agreeably to the Gospel. That one Text proves it. *A GOOD UNDERSTANDING have all they who do his Commandments.* Psal. cxi. 10.

This notion of Orthodoxy is supported by the whole Body of the *Scriptures*, which every where pronounces *upright* and *obedient* Christians blessed. It is also consonant to the dictates of *Reason*, that a wise and good God shou'd not require of any Man more than *heartly desires* to find out the Truth, and *earnest Endeavours* in practising it. The plain Language of Scripture and Reason is, that every *good Man* is a sound Man, and every *upright Preacher* Orthodox.

B. But I mean, that our Ministers preach sound Doctrine, and are themselves found in the Faith,

C. So

6. So does every faithful Preacher, preach sound Doctrine; and every upright Christian is found in the Faith. Upright and honest Men, unless under the strong Prejudices of a false Education, cannot mistake the great Doctrines and Laws of Jesus Christ; if, instead of searching the Books of Men, they look for them in God's own Book.

But as you are wonderful Dealers in these two Words *Sound* and *Orthodox*, let us briefly consider in what Sense St. Paul uses the word *Sound*.

By *sound Doctrine* 1 Tim. i. 10. I apprehend St. Paul means Doctrine that condemns Whoring and Lewdness, Lying and Stealing, Malice and Murder, that is, the great *Laws* of Religion and Morality. Now what Ministers best preach this sort of *sound Doctrine*, I leave you to Judge.

A *sound Mind* 2 Tim. i. 7. is a Mind steady to Christ and Christianity; or a being *sound in God's Statutes*. Psal cxix. 8.

The *form of sound Words* mention'd 2 Tim. i. 13. surely does not mean the *Assemblies Catechism*, nor any *Church Articles*, nor any Words which Man's Wisdom (or Folly) have taught; but Words which the Holy Ghost hath taught, Words of Scripture.

Men who will not indure *sound Doctrine* 2 Tim. iv. 3. are Men who love not to hear, and will not be governed by the Laws of Jesus Christ; Men who (with all their Faith) walk after their own Lusts; who have itching Ears, and run from Preacher to Preacher, being fond of every new Doctrine. These are the People who can't indure sound Doctrine; and you know who they are.

Sound

Sound Doctrines in Tit. i. 9. are Gospel motives and strong Arguments, fit for Exhortation and Conviction.

Sound in the Faith, v. 13. Means living up to their Knowledge, Faith and Profession; not attending to Fables, and human Doctrines; owning God *in Works*, as well as with the Mouth. ver. 16.

Sound Doctrine, Tit. ii. 1. is preaching and giving Rules of Practise, of Virtue and Morality to both Sexes, to the Aged and the Young suitable to their State.

Sound in the Faith, v. 2. means to be faithful; as *sound in Charity* means to be sincerely Charitable.

Sound Speech, v. 9. is just and rational Speech, which cannot be confuted and condemned; *uncorrupted* by human Doctrines; *gravely* delivered, not comically; from a *sincere Heart*, not an inflamed Head.

Thus I have gone thro' all the Texts in the *New Testament* which speak of *sound Doctrine, Speech and Faith*; and leave you to judge whether your new tantivy Preachers, who come riding in from all Parts of the Country, are the *sound Men* you boast them to be.

B. I own the Contexts of these several Texts seem to countenance your Exposition of them. Therefore to let the Words *Sound* and *Orthodox* lye by; I think our Ministers teach very *true* Doctrine, and that there was great need of 'em in Town to put a stop to those Errors which begin to spread so fast.

C. I am willing, Neighbour, as far as my Ability goes, to try the Matter with you, on which side the Truth lies. To this end let me know what are those peculiar Doctrines your Teachers come here in such Numbers to support, or what Errors do they come to oppose.

B. One of the principal Doctrines they come to maintain is the Doctrine of the ever blessed *Trinity*.

C. If by the Doctrine of the *Trinity* you mean the Doctrine of *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*; they might have stay'd at home; in regard, as far as I know the Town, this Doctrine is firmly believ'd by every Preacher in Town, and by all their Hearers.

B. I chiefly mean the *Divinity of Jesus Christ*.

C. I know no Christian, much less any Christian Preacher who denieth it. Is it therefore well done in you and your Preachers to spread such false Reports of your Fellow-Christians? I hope you think *Lying* a great Sin; and *accusing the Brethren falsely* a Work of the Devil. Can you therefore justify your Teachers in such a Charge, before they know it to be true and are able to prove it; and which perhaps they know to be false?

B. I cannot justify Lying and Falseness, Calumny and Clamour in any Cause. I am sensible the Cause of Christ and Truth do not need them. But they mean that some Preachers and People in Town deny the *supreme Deity* of Jesus Christ, and his Equality with the Father.

C. Is not this a very wicked way of proceeding, to charge Men with denying the Divinity
of

of Jesus Christ, who only deny his *supreme Deity* and *Equality* with the Father.

For my Part, I hold Jesus Christ to be God, or a God, because the Father hath given him divine Perfections, and universal Dominion, or Headship, Authority to judge, and has commanded all Men to worship him.

But I can't bring my self to believe his *supreme Deity*, because I believe in the same supreme Deity of God the Father; and it appears to me a plain contradiction to say there are two Persons or Beings who are both of 'em *supreme* or *most High God*; and I never yet had Faith eno' to believe two contradictory Propositions.

As my Reason, my Understanding, the Candle of the Lord within me, telleth me there can be but one *supreme* or *most High God*: So I think the whole Scriptures lead me to think that this *supreme, most High God* is the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; and not the Son of God the Father.

Before the Lord Jesus Christ became Man, or had a Body prepared for him, he came from the Father, was sent by Him, and imployed by him; But can the *supreme God* be sent or commissioned by another? Shou'd we not abhor so absurd and blasphemous a Thought? Therefore it is impossible that Jesus Christ shou'd be the *supreme God*; and wou'd you have me believe Impossibilities?

B. But does not St. Paul affirm that Christ thought it *no Robbery to be equal with God*. Phil. ii. 6.

C. That Translation is, I think, given up by most learned Men; because it corresponds not to

C

the

the Original Greek. However I think it must be wrong.

1. Because it no way suiteth the *Context*, which speaks of the same Person as *in the Form*, Image or Likeness of God, as *obedient* to God, or *exalted* by him.

2. Because it is contradictory to the Reason God has given us as our highest Guide, to conceive that the Son, who was begotten by the Father, who *came from* him, who hath his Life, Power, Dominion, Glory as a Gift and Reward from the Father, should be *equal* to God the Father, who came from none, nor can receive any Thing, which he had not originally and underived in himself. This appears to me another Contradiction to make a derived and an underived being equal.

3. Because it is a Sense contrary to all those plain Texts which speak of Christ as the express *Image* of the Father as *commissioned* by him; as *doing* his Will, as seeking his Glory, as praying to him to be taken back into his original Glory, as appointed by God universal Head and Judge.

B. But does not Christ himself say, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30.

C. Christ says, *I* (as one Person); and *my Father* (as another Person) wou'd you have him contradict himself in the same Breath, by saying we two Persons are *one Person*, *one Being*, *one God*. And this too, after he had just affirm'd, that all his Miracles he wrote *in his Father's Name*, and that his *Father was greater than all*. 'Tis an easy, natural & just Sense, that *He* and the *Father* were one, as he did the Father's Will,
and

and acted by Commission from him, and pursued the same End and Design; this suits the whole Context. Why then shou'd we attempt to force upon the Words a sense unnatural, unintelligible and contradictory, that is to make Nonsense of it. When Christ says, *John xvii. 21. That they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I, in thee, that they also may be one in us:* You'll not deify all Believers or Apostles upon such a Text.

B. But our Ancient Divine have always taken it for a *Unity of Essence*.

C. Some ancient Divines, I am told, have taken it otherwise. And as to *Essence* it is a Word I scarce will understand, but as far I do understand it I can't think that a begotten and an unbegotten Essence are the same. And the Sense I have given appears to me so just, that we need not seek any other.

B. Tho' there may be some Difficulties in this Matter not easily got over; yet I think we cannot speak too honourably of the Son of God; nor can I bear to hear any thing lessening said of him.

C. Are you not, at least ought you not to be as Zealous for the Glory of *God the Father*, who so loved the World as to send his *only begotten Son* to save it? Is not God the Father greatly dishonoured by setting up a Rival with him in supreme Empire? Can any thing be more affronting and dishonourable to the Son of God, than to suppose that he is this Rival, who declares he always sought the Father's Honour? Can any Conduct more displease him than to *belye him* as the *Jews* did, by saying He made himself *equal* with

God, because he said he was the *Son of God*? Are not the Scriptures the Measure of the Honours to be paid to the Son of God? Shou'd not we follow his Example, and make his Father's Honour our chief End? For my Part I never heard any of our Divines speak a dishonouring Word of the Son of God; and it is a very bad Office in your little nibbling Teachers to accuse them of it. If Jesus Christ be honoured as the only begotten Son of God, as a Teacher sent from God, as the promised Messiah and Saviour, as the only appointed Mediator and Intercessor, as universal Lord and as final Judge: Is not this all the Honour the Scriptures claim for him? Did he ever challenge more? Does a string of great swelling Words, hard and unintelligible Names, *Co-essential*, *Con-substantial*, *Co-eternal*, do him any Honour? Or, is not doing his Will, and keeping his Commands the truest Honour? Will he own any others as his Friends, but such as do whatsoever he commands them? Will crying, *Lord, Lord*, or any pretended Honours paid him with the Lips be accepted while He is denied in Works?

B. These you mention as only chiming Words, are great and *Mysterious* Points, above our Comprehension; yet we ought to believe them, tho' we do not understand them.

C. All your Contradictions and Jargon you cover with the sacred Name of *Mysteries*; they are indeed Incomprehensible, just as *Transubstantiation* is, nothing in them is comprehensible but the Absurdity of them. If I cou'd comprehend any Truth in them, I shou'd readily believe it; but to tell me I must believe what I do not understand,

stand, is to tell me I must believe *I know not what*. This blind Belief you are taught. But Jesus Christ acted in another Manner; and has not required us to believe any Doctrine, but what he first clearly revealed and explained. If any Doctrine was a Mystery before, his Revealing it has made it no longer a Mystery.

B. I hope I can convince you that you are wrong here by one plain Instance. You believe the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, yet I hope you do not pretend to understand it.

C. I believe no more about it than I do understand; I believe the Dead shall rise and live, and I very well understand what Rising from the Dead and Living again means, as well as I do what Rising from Sleep, and Living again means. But as to the *Mode* or Manner of the Resurrection, nothing about it being, revealed, I have no Ideas about it; and therefore can believe nothing about what I understand nothing.

B. The Doctrine of the *Con-substantiality*, *Co-equality*, &c. of the Son of God is a Doctrine indeed *above our Reason*, but not *contrary to Reason*; therefore if revealed, ought to be received.

C. If it be *above our Reason*, we have nothing to do with it as I have shewed, and can believe nothing about it: If it *be revealed*, it is revealed *to our Reason*, and may be understood and believed; otherwise it is not revealed. And, I think, I have proved that this Doctrine, as your Treachers represent it, is *not revealed* by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and that it *cannot be revealed* from the God of Truth, being not only above, but *contrary* to our Ideas of God, and to all the Dictates of Reason.

B

B. However I cannot think it safe to go off the antient Protestant Doctrine in this Article of our Faith.

C. Nor can I think it safe to go off the much more ancient Gospel Doctrine; nor to be governed by blind, implicit Faith in any of our Teachers.

B. Will you set up your Judgment against your Teachers?

C. All the Protestants did so, when they left the Chrch of *Rome*; you Dissenters do so, in leaving our Church. The *Jews* did so in following *Peter* and *Paul* and *Jesus Christ*. Our best Protestant Divines teach us to do so, when ever our Teachers depart from God's Word and teach for Doctrines of God the Words of Men.

Now when any Preachers preach the *Co-equality, Co-essentiality, Supremacy* of the Son of God, according to my Understanding they preach the Doctrines of Men instead of the Truths of God. Ought I not then to follow my own private Judgment, or to believe and act according to my own Understanding and Conscience after I have obtained all the Light and Help I can? Do not you act thus, and every honest Man? If I have God's Word on my side, is not that enough? But besides I have our most learned Divines, and those I count the best Preachers on my side also; and I do not intend to forsake them to follow a Parcel of bold Fellows, who might do well enough at their *Looms*, but make sad work of it in the *Pulpit*.

B. I'll reply to all your Reasoning only this,
That *the natural Man receiveth not the things of*
the

the Spirit of God; They are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

C. This is a Text which every Enthusiast and Impudent Prator maketh the last Refuge. You do not consider Neighbour, what a spirit of Pride and Presumption it discovers to suppose all who differ from you *natural and carnal Men*, and all on your own side *spiritual Men*. Have not we the same *Revelation* of the Spirit to be our Guide that you have; and where has God promised your Teachers more *Assistance* from the Spirit than other Men who seek it as earnestly as they. But your Teachers are as remarkable for *Modesty* in the Pulpit as for the *good Sense* they deliver there. But enough of this.

Pray what other Fundamental Doctrines do these new Preachers come now to Propagate?

B. That great and most comfortable Doctrine of God's electing from all eternity a certain Number out of the fallen Race of Mankind, to everlasting Life.

C. But did not God, from all Eternity, foresee *the whole human Race* in a fallen and helpless Condition?

B. Yes.

C. And did he decree Help only for a very few of these?

B. Yes, only for a few.

C. Are not the Rest for whom he ordained no Help equally his Off-spring, his Creatures and Children?

B. Yes, He is the Maker of All.

C. Where then is his *Pity*, his *Grace*, the sound-
ing

ing of his Bowels over those Millions of undone Creatures, whom he resolved not to help?

B. The Grace of God is *free*, and He may do what he will with his own.

C. If God's Grace be *free*, upon your Principles it is very *little*. What can we think of a Father, who seeth all his Children in Misery, and who has Ability enough to help them all, and yet resolves to send Help to a very few only. Will that Rule bring him off, "that he may do what He will with his own?" Instead of a merciful, good and tender hearted Father, will not the World Judge him a hard hearted Wretch; who saw the Ship split in Pieces, and all his Children like to be drown'd; and while he had Boats enough to save them all, yet sent them out only to save two or three out of a hundred perishing Children. You talk a deal of *Grace* and *free Grace*, but when your dark Scheme is examined, and your hideous Doctrine opened, there appears little Grace and Charity in it; God is robbed by it of his chief Glory.

B. But God's Grace is free to the Elect.

C. These you say are very few; none of the *Heathens*; perhaps none of the *Papists*; amongst the *Protestants* none but such as hold your Fundamentals; so that the *Elect* will be reduc'd to a few *whimsical Baptists*. As if *Heaven* was a Region of Enthusiasm, Error, Bigotry, and Uncharitableness; and the Elect a parcel of proud, self-conceited Separatists.

B. You grow warm, Friend, and carry your Reflection too far.

C. If

C. If Warmth can ever be justified, it may in such a Cause as this.

To see and hear Doctrines published and defended which obscure the richest Grace of God, and represent him as the *most cruel Being* in the Universe; who, when He cou'd easily and honourably Help the infinite Race of his fallen Off-spring, decreed Help only for a very few, and that without *any Reason* at all on his Children's Part, those being previously *no better* than the Rest who are left to perish under his unpitying Eye.

Will it not excuse a little Warmth, to hear the good and blessed God represented not only as the *most cruel and unmerciful*, but as the *most deceitful and insincere Being*; who tho' he has decreed no saving Help for the greatest Part of his lost Children, yet pretends *to offer* them Help; and also as a *most unrighteous Being* who threatens a severer Damnation if they accept not his offers, which he knows they cannot accept? Is not this a *mocking* his Creatures already Helpless, and an *insulting* over their Miseries; in stead of shewing them any Mercy?

Will any wise, just and good Father act at this rate? And shall we ascribe all this Folly, partiality and unkind Dealing to God?

B. We must not measure God by Man; nor the Ways of God by the Ways of Men, his thoughts and ways are far above ours.

C. They are *far above* ours in Mercy, Goodness, Grace, Wisdom and Justice, not *far below* ours. If we must judge at all of God's Wisdom, Justice and Charity, we must judge of 'em by *his Actions and Works*, as we do of Men's by theirs.

theirs. Does not God call Men to judge of the Equity and Kindness of his Ways, and to compare them with Men's? Must we not judge of them by the best Ideas of Justice and Kindness we have? Now can we possibly judge God to be Wise, Just and Merciful if *his Ways* are not so? And can we possibly *love him*, while we conceive of him as no way lovely?

B. God hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; and what is Man to contend with God; hath not the *Potter* power over his own Clay?

C. Pray cease abusing and misapplying Scripture; quote not God's own Word against Himself, to prove him without any Mercy towards Millions of his perishing Creatures. God was at Liberty to shew Mercy to the lost Nations of the World, ^{when} ~~now~~ the *Jews* rejected offered Grace. He acted, both in calling *Gentiles* into his Kingdom, and in rejecting the *Jews*, according to *his Will*; but he willed both these Events according to Reason and Justice.

Nor did God harden *Pharaoh's* Heart any other way that we know of, but by kindness to *Israel*, and reprieves to Himself; and leaving him to pursue the wicked Counsels of his Heart. But you make God *more foolish* than any *Potter*, and more *hard-hearted* than *Pharaoh*; He set Taskmasters over *Israel* to torment them and diminish them for a few Years: But upon your Principles, God torments his own Creatures and Children Millions of Years and Ages for what they *cou'd not Help*; and this ~~was~~ only to shew what his Power and Wrath can do, or from pure ill-nature;

nature; whereas *Pharaoh* acted from a Principle of Self-Preservation.

B. But Sinners may help many of their Sins; and therefore are justly condemn'd for doing what they shou'd not have done, and for not doing what they cou'd do.

C. Many of your Preachers say they are decreed to be damned for being *fallen in Adam*; and I am sure they *cou'd not help that*. And is not this a cruel, unwise, and unjust Decree? Can any but a Devil make such a Decree?

B. You talk strangely, and run great Lengths; I hope our Principles are not chargeable at this Rate?

C. It is plain they are, I go not a tittle farther than your own Principles carry me. If God has decreed to damn Millions of Men for being fallen in *Adam*, he has made the most unjust Decree that ever was made, a thousand Times more unjust than the Decree of *Pharaoh* to drown all the Male Children, because they were born of *Israelitish* Parents, or were born *Males*; neither of which cou'd the Children help. This is horrid Doctrine.

B. I own as you represent it, this appears horrid Doctrine, I cannot think that of the ever blessed God, our Preachers do not talk in this way.

C. No, they hide the horrid Consequences from you, and cheat you with Contradictions.

B. I have heard them often say, that Men will be damned for not believing and rejecting Christ; and for not being converted to God.

C. If God; has decreed to damn Men, for not believing in a Christ, who never died for them:

If he has decreed to damn Men for not being converted, when he has decreed not to convert them: Is not this decreeing to damn them for not believing Contradictions, or Falshoods; and for not doing Impossibilities? Is this that God who is *good to all*, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works? Can a wise, a just, a merciful God order weak Men to remove Mountains, and then damn them if they do not?

B. Since God offers Salvation to all, Men are justly condemn'd if they never try to accept it.

C. Thus you make God the greatest of all Cheats when he offers to Sinners a Salvation *never purchased* for them, and which he has absolutely decreed never to give them: And when he offers it *upon Conditions* they cannot comply with, without *irresistible Grace*, and he has decreed never to give them that Grace: And when he threatens a *heavier Damnation* to them if they do not believe and obey the Gospel, which he knows they cannot do. Is this the Divinity of your Preachers! This is indeed a new Gospel, just as unlike the kind and merciful Gospel of Jesus Christ; as a false and merciless Devil is unlike the true and merciful God.

B. Tho' I am not for these Extreams; yet I can't but think the Doctrine of God's *electing Love* a very *comfortable* Doctrine.

C. Must not He be a perfect Visionary, or a hard-hearted Son, who cou'd take any Comfort from a Decree of his Father to give him his whole Estate, while all the rest of his Children are left to endless Beggary? Can a wise and good Child take any Comfort from a Thought
which

which wou'd represent his Father as a partial Tyrant, relentlessly cruel to the greatest Part of his Off-spring? Can any wise and good Man comfort himself in a Doctrine which paints God in so unlovely and horrid ōn Image; and which leaves Millions of God's Creatures in helpless Misery for ever? Can any Man justly take Comfort in a Doctrine which makes it *a hundred to one* that he is not elected, but must be for ever damn'd? Doth not the Gospel give better Grounds of Comfort arising from God's Universal Love to a lost World, and the general offers of Mercy?

B. But if Sinners will not *try* and use their best Endeavours, they will deserve Punishment.

C. Why shou'd Men try at Impossibilities? Will their best Endeavours change God's Decrees? If Men must stand or fall *according to their Works*, there is Room for Endeavours, and for Perswasions to use them; but if according to *eternal absolute Decrees*, there is room for neither.

B. If Men have lost their Ability to repent, believe and obey, may not God justly punish them for not using it?

C. If they have wilfully lost it, they may be punished as far as that Crime deserveth; but then to require them to do what they have *no Ability* to do, is *Tyranny*; and to punish them again for not doing it, is *Cruelty*; and to make them fine offers on Condition they will do, what they have no Ability to do, is *Delusion* and *Insult*. Is this Gospel? Are these glad Tidings? Is Satan more unlike an Angel of Light, than these Articles are to the Gospel of Truth and Love? But pray
when

when and how did Men lose their Ability to repent, to believe and obey the Gospel?

B. They lost it in *Adam*; and by and at the Fall.

C. I suppose the Women lost it in *Eve*, and the Men in *Adam*. And did they indeed lose it near 6000 Years before they had it, or before they had a Being? I wonder to hear a Man who can talk good Sense about Trade, Civil Justice, Affairs of State, talk so point-blank Nonsense in Divinity. But suppose *Adam* lost a Power to repent, believe and obey the Gospel, before he had it; and lost it from us many Ages before we had a Being; Is it Just to condemn to Hell Fire innocent Children for what their great Ancestor did 4 or 6000 Years before they were born? Or can you think God is at all Angry with *us* for what *Adam* did; if we approve of, and imitate *Adam's* Transgression, we may be punish'd for such Approbation and Imitation; but not for his Transgression.

B. Tho' I cannot say, that God is Angry with us for what *Adam* did, yet the Scripture says, That *by the Disobedience of one, many were made Sinners*; and that *thro' the Offence of one, Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation*.

C. But must we interpret these Texts against all Rules of Reason; and against the Unchangeable ^{Law} Love of God? That Children shall not die for the Iniquity of the Father. See *Ezek. xviii. 20*. I own we suffer loss thro' *Adam's* Fall; and have an Hereditary Disease conveyed to us, which worketh Death; as many Children lose Estates and Health thro'

thro' the Iniquity of their Parents; That St. *Paul* by *Sinners* means *Sufferers* is plain not only from Reason, for no other Sense can be true; but from his own Explication. *In Adam all die*. But as Men *pity* those who are made unhappy thro' the Fault of others, so does God; He pities the human Race; and in his Love and Pity has sent his Son to redeem and save them.

B. Tho' I shou'd allow that we are not properly guilty of *Adam's* Sin; yet may not God impute it to us, as he was our Representative?

C. If we had been in Being, had been Principals in the Affair, and *Adam* had acted by our Order, his Action might justly be so far imputed to us. But will a just and good God impute to you and me what we never did, or possibly cou'd do; what we knew nothing of, nor possibly cou'd know; what we never consented to, or approved of? Will He charge to our Account what we are as Innocent of as the Child unborn is of his Father's Crimes and Follies? Shall we thus quit our Understandings, and give up all the Principles of Reason, Truth and Justice, in order to compose an absurd and unrighteous Scheme of Divinity!

B. Tho' these Things seem so contrary to human Reason; they are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures.

C. A fine Complement upon the Holy Scriptures, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as if it was the most irrational and absurd Book in the World. Is this the way to recommend your Notions to Men of Sense and Reason, to allow that they are irrational and absurd? Is not this blaspheming the Holy

Holy Bible, to suppose the Doctrines of God, the great Author of Reason, are contradictory to Reason? For my Part, I receive the Gospel, because I believe it to be the most wise, reasonable, just, sincere and friendly Institution in the World. If, upon Examination, it appear an Unreasonable Gospel, I ought to reject it, because such a Gospel can never come from God. There are many *Jewish Phrases* in it which are easily misunderstood and abused by fanciful Men. But is any Thing more rational, more agreeable to human Reason than the Preaching of Christ and his Apostles?

B. I own their Discourses are becoming Men of Sense, and who had the Spirit of God. But what will you make of those several Texts which so plainly assert a *Predestination* and *Election* in the Epistles of *Paul* and *Peter*.

C. Those Texts have been strangely applied to God's choosing from Eternity a few particular Persons to everlasting Life, without any Respect to their Behaviour, and for no Reason at all; contrary to the whole Stream and Design of the Bible, and contrary to all wise Rules of Government; and in contradiction to a Judgment to come, when Men will be saved or condemned, not according to absolute *Election*, but according to their *Works*.

B. Pray, Friend, how will you understand these Texts, if not in the Sense of our Divines.

C. As far as my Reading and Judgment go, and as some, whom I esteem the best Writers and Preachers teach. Those Texts are to be understood of God's first Electing and Adopting the Seed

Seed of *Abraham*; and then upon their crucifying the Son of God and rejecting his Gospel, God's choosing, electing or adopting all the spiritual Seed of *Abraham* tho' amongst the *Gentiles*, all virtuous and good Men, all who believ'd the Gospel; and this agreeable to his ancient Designs, before he laid the Foundation of the *Jewish* Ages.

B. I own this is a plausible Account, agreeable enough to the History of the Old and New Testament; and carrieth in it a grand Scheme of Providence, and is free of all Absurdities. But it is not the Sense given by our old Protestant Divines, Men who had the Spirit of God.

C. I have as great a Respect for our old Divines as you; but not a blind Faith in any Man. They brought a great deal of Light, and did a great deal of good; but shall we restrain the Spirit of God to them; or must we make no Progress in Knowledge? Or if God raise up other Lights, must we refuse their Help? I doubt not; if our old Divines were now alive, they wou'd agree to the Sense I have given.

B. Notwithstanding, I think we ought not too suddenly to depart from the Principles and Faith, for which our Father's suffered.

C. They suffered for a Scripture Religion, and the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment; and used their own Understandings and Reason, as we do ours. They suffered, because they cou'd not *believe* as their Fathers did; and wou'd not *do*, in Matters of Religion and Conscience, as their superiors required. They did not suffer for the peculiar Opinions of a Party, but for the

common Rights of Mankind, and the Doctrines in which all good Christians agree.

B. To pass over these Points; how will you defend the hated Doctrine of *Free-will*, so dishonourable to the *Free-Grace* of God?

C. You are great Boasters of *Grace*, and yet are the greatest Enemies to it in the World. Is it *Grace* in God to have no Pity on Millions of his helpless Creatures, but decree them to Hell for being unhappily born? Is it *Grace* in God to order his Son to die for a very small part of Mankind only, when without suffering any more he might have died for all? Is it *Grace* in God to send abroad his Gospel and Ministers to spread the News of a Saviour; when hereby the Number of the *Reprobated* cannot be diminished, nor the *Elect* increased? Is it *Grace* in God to command Men to do, what he never gave them Power to do? Is it *Grace* in God to offer Men a Saviour, whom he knows they cannot accept? Is it *Grace* to condemn ^{men} for not believing in a Christ who never died for them, and in whom they never cou'd believe without irresistible Grace, which is yet denied them? Are your Ministers the *Preachers of Grace* then? Are they not the chief Disparagers of it?

B. However you represent the Matter, our Ministers preach *Christ* and *Free-Grace* more than any other Men, and for this Reason we admire and like 'em.

C. I know they have about twenty or thirty hackney Words and Phrases, which come into almost every Sermon; take these from them and they are at a full stand, and can't make another
Sermon

Sermon. *Free-Grace* is one of this precious List. But, in my Opinion, they are the best Preachers of *Christ* and *Free-Grace*, who open, inforce and apply the whole Gospel, of which the Sermons of *Jesus Christ* are doubtless a Principal Part.

B. You seem to put off the Article of *Free-will*, as if afraid to meddle with it.

C. If by *Free-will* you mean a Faculty or Power in Man, to turn his Thoughts to this subject, or another; to do good or ill Actions, to choose the way of Life or of Death, when both are set before him; to receive or reject the offers of Christ, when fairly made; I can't but think every Man hath this sort of *Free-will*. But your Preachers have made a *Bugbear* of the Word, and try to fright Women and Children out of their Senses by it. And the sound of *Free-Will* terrifies some weak-headed Men almost as much as the sight of a *Ghost*.

B. You seem to raise the Creature very high: This exalting of Man tempts him to be proud of himself.

C. I raise him higher than the Stones of the Field, and the Beasts of the Earth, because God has rais'd him higher. Nor is it any Temptation to Pride for a Man to believe himself a *Reasonable Creature*, and a *Free-Agent*; but that he is a reasonable Creature is a Motive to admiring Thankfulness; and that he is a *Free-Agent* is a Motive to Watchfulness, Diligence and Caution. Besides you who declaim against *Free-Agency*, act upon this Principle as much as other Men: You expect to be praised when you do well; you blame Men who cheat you; you call to

Account your Servants and Children, reward and punish as you think they deserve; you exhort and persuade to Religion and good Works: Thus you act and live upon the Principle of *Free-Agency*, while in Words you deny it. Thus do Antinomian Notions in Divinity turn Men's Heads, and quite intoxicate their Brains; so that tho' on any other subject they talk sensibly; as soon ^{as they} at you enter the subject of Divinity, they begin to rave and talk wildly.

B. I allow Men *free to Evil*, but not to Good.

C. Unhappy Case! better for us we had never been made, than made under a necessity of Sinning. Is Man the Workmanship of a wise and merciful God, who has only given him a Power to *ruin*, but no Power to help himself? Besides *free to Evil*, is like the Rest of your Divinity, Self-contradictory; what Freedom is there, without a Power to do good. God's Law is, *Cease to do Evil, Learn to do Well*; does not this imply a Power to do it, or as much Freedom to do Well as to do Ill; unless bad Habits and Custom in Sin have, in a moral Sense weakened this Power? Besides, if Men have no Power to do good, how are they *upon Trial*, whether they will behave well or ill? And if they have no Power over their own Actions, how will they be *judged* at last? Why are Men *perswaded* and exhorted to do good, if they have no Power, or no Direction of that Power? Is any thing *Duty*, which is impossible? Is not yours strange Doctrine, which at once over-throws the grand Doctrine of a future Judgment; and renders needless and ridiculous all Preaching?

B. Man

B. Man had a Power to do good, but lost it in *Adam*, and God is not obliged to restore it.

C. This is the old senseless Story confuted before, and which indeed confutes it self. Are you conscious of any Being or Powers you had four or six thousand Years ago? Let *Adam* bear his own Guilt, and every Man his. But supposing this Doctrine as possible, true and just; as it is impossible, false and unjust; yet is it fair to *treat me*, as if I had a Power which I have not; and to *judge* and *condemn me* for what the Judge knows I have no Power to do.

B. You talk as if Man had a Power to *convert himself*, without the Almighty and irresistible Grace of God.

C. A Man may go on so long in a Course of Sin, till he is grown hard and inflexible, and has lost all Inclination to turn to God and a new Life. But to say a Man *cannot turn to God* under the Light, Calls and Aids of the Gospel, is to represent God as very weak and unjust, to be at so much Expence in calling Men to Impossibilities. It is to make the Gospel not only a useless, but a deceitful Institution. It is an intolerable Abuse of Mankind, and makes their Case almost desperate. Will a good God thus tantalize his own Children? Is this the Doctrine of *Grace*?

B. But our Teachers all say, That no Man can come to God unless irresistible Grace draw him.

C. And then He cannot help turning, then there can be *no Fault* in not turning; and *no Virtue* in turning to God. A fine Account of the Gospel! Are Men *to be blamed* for not having irresistible Grace?

Grace? Or *commended* for not resisting Almighty Power? Will God *punish* Men for ever in Hell for *not being elected*, which was his own Act, not theirs; or for *not being converted*, which was to be effected by his Power, not theirs? Or will God *reward* Men for ever in Heaven, for doing what they cou'd not help doing; or for what they really did not, but what God himself did in them? Is this judging Men according to their Works?

B. I have heard our Divines say, God will reward his own Work, and crown his Grace with Glory.

C. Your Preachers have got the wonderful Art of perswading their Hearers, that all their mysterious Nonsense is sublime Divinity. God will reward Men according to *their own Works*, not according to his; And if Men improve well the Grace of the Gospel, their Piety and Virtue, Labours and Faithfulness shall be crown'd with Glory. This is the Doctrine of the Bible, plain, intelligible Doctrine.

B. Still I can't believe that any Man can come to Christ except God the Father draw him.

C. And is not God drawing all Men, who live under the Gospel, by Cords of a Man, and Bands of Love? But Men do resist the Holy Ghost, and when God wou'd heal them will not be healed, nor come to Christ for Life; being unfruitful, and disobedient.

B. You are still for exalting Man, and laying stress upon his Righteousness and good Works; whereas all our Righteousness is as filthy Rags; and I expect to be saved only for the Righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by Faith.

C. I

C. I allow the false and deceitful, the out-side, and ceremonial Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, of *Jewish* and Christian Hypocrites; their Fastings, Tears and long-whining Prayers, their furious and blind Zeal for dry Opinions and Doctrines of Men, may well enough be compar'd to *filthy Rags*. But I hope the Righteousness of the Saints, their Love and good Works, their Holiness and Obedience, their Mercy and Charity; their living soberly, justly, devoutly, is not Filthiness and Rags; unless you will call the Image of God, and Imitation of Christ Filthiness. Is not Righteousness and Loving Kindness, being Good, and doing Good, the Glory of God? and is it not the highest Perfection of Man? Does not this render Men *lovely*, procure them a *good Report*, and intitle them to *Praise* and *Honour* at the coming of Jesus Christ? And will you dare to call it all *Filthiness* and *Rags*? Take care, Neighbour how you fling Dirt on God's Image, affront the Spirit of Holiness, contradict the whole Gospel, confound Holiness and Unholiness.

B. But *Paul* renounced his own Righteousness, which is of the Law, and trusted to that which is thro' the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. *Phil. iii. 9.*

C. His *Jewish* Righteousness, or Conformity to the Ceremonial Law, he did renounce; he trusted not in Circumcision, his Relation to *Abraham*, his bitter persecuting Zeal. *Ver. 4, 5, 6.* But his *Christian* Righteousness, his Conformity to the Gospel, he did not, he cou'd not renounce. No, this was his chief Endeavour, to conform to Christ in Sufferings and a new Life, in pressing
after

after the Mark, by holy Obedience, in walking by the Rule of the Gospel, and in a heavenly Conversation. *Ver. 10,---21.*

B. I dare trust to no Righteousness and good Works of my own for Acceptance with God.

C. But dare you trust God's Word, that if you continue in well-doing, and seek, in that way Honour, Glory and Immortality, you shall have eternal Life? Trusting in God to be saved in the Way of Faithfulness and Gospel Obedience, at the End, (and as the Crown) of a Sober, Just, Charitable, Religious Life, is not trusting *your own Righteousness*.

B. I am sensible I am a guilty Creature, and can plead nothing of my own, therefore I trust in the imputed Righteousness of Christ.

C. We are all guilty before God; but if renewed by Repentance, we are encouraged by the Gospel to plead that Repentance as a Qualification for, and Title to Pardon. As to the *imputed Righteousness of Christ*, it is a Phrase no where to be found in God's Book, nor is easy to be understood, and I wonder you shou'd be so fond of it, and lay such stress upon it.

B. Our Divines have always spoke of this as a Fundamental Doctrine, and I cannot give it up.

C. Your Divines have used themselves to talk wild and strange Things; have bewitched People with their Sorceries, and led Captive silly Women by sugared Phrases, but at the Bottom a poysonous Doctrine.

B. I wonder you shou'd thus represent so great a Gospel Doctrine.

C. As

C. As there is not a Word of it in the Gospel; so it is an Encouragement to bad Men and loose Women, who, tho' destitute of Virtue and Goodness, tho' without Sobriety, Chastity and a good Life, yet hope to be saved by the Righteousness of another, while they have none of their own. Thus are the Hands of the wicked strengthened, and Virtue and Vice confounded. This Doctrine is also a Discouragement to good Men; as if all their Labours of Love, their Obedience, Faithfulness, Diligence, Self-denial, Charity, Goodness were nothing Worth; unless they also believe in the unscriptural and unintelligible Doctrine of the Righteousness of another imputed to them.

B. Is not Faith imputed for Righteousness; and is not Christ made of God unto us Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption? Was not Christ, who knew no Sin, made Sin for us; that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him?

C. Yes; but it is certain God never imputes to any Man what he never did, or what was no way his. He therefore imputed to Abraham his own Faith, and faithful Obedience, and counted this his Righteousness, without any of the Works of the Ceremonial Law; which was not then given. To Christ his Son God imputed his own perfect Righteousness. He also makes the Doctrine, Example, the Life and Death of Christ a means of making Men Holy, Wise, Righteous and Blessed, and thus is Christ made unto us Righteousness. And as Christ, tho' no Sinner yet suffered as a Sinner; so we, tho' Sinners, upon Repentance and

Compliance with the Gospel, shall be pardoned, justified and accepted of God.

B. But can a Sinner appear before God in his own imperfect Righteousness?

C. If he appear before God a true Penitent, a sincere Disciple of Christ, and be, thro' Faith, Obedient to the Gospel; he appears in the Character the Gospel requireth, and will be accepted and pardoned; and, if he persevere to the End, will be saved.

B. You seem to speak slightly of the Doctrine of *Perseverance*, as if it was uncertain whether a Child of God shou'd persevere.

C. I hope every truly good Man will persevere in his Goodness: Yet I cannot say it is impossible for a righteous Man to turn from his Righteousness, to commit Iniquity, and to die in his Sin. *Ezek. xviii.* Nor can I say it is impossible for a Man who has tasted of the heavenly Gift, and has partook of the Holy Ghost---to fall away. *Heb. vi.* What need of so many Cautions given to Persons and Churches to Watch and Pray lest [they enter into Temptation, to hold fast, to continue in well-doing, &c. if Apostacy was impossible? Do Men use to warn their Children to shun impossible Events? Did not *David* and *Peter* Apostatize and fall away, as well as *Judas*?

B. They did not fall finally.

C. No, they turned again from their Iniquity, and did that which was right: But as it was possible for them to fall into Sin, mortal Sin; so it was possible for them to have *died* in the Sin they had finned;

sinned; and how they wou'd have fared in that Case, I leave you to Judge.

B. But I have heard it from our Preachers, and have read it in some of our Books, *that God sees no Sin in his own People*, because he looks on them thro' Christ, and as cloathed with his perfect Righteousness.

C. And can you have Patience to hear and read Doctrines so immoral and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so shocking to a pious Mind? Did not God see *David*, when he committed Adultery? And did He not see it to be what it was, great Sin; and did he not impute to him, and punish him for it? Did not Christ see *Peter* deny him, and was it not a capital Sin? Does not God see all Men and all Things just as they are? And is not Sin in Professors of Religion more aggravated than in other Men? Is this a Doctrine according to Godliness? Upon this Principle a Man need but fancy he is elected; and was once converted, and then he may Sin at any Rate. I have known some Men and Women of suspicious Characters, who yet have pretended to be great Believers, and to belong to God's Elect; and no wonder, when they find themselves encouraged in such unsound Hopes by Doctrines so Destructive. Does God promise Pardon and eternal Life upon any other Condition than Repentance, Holiness, and Faithfulness to the End?

B. We think the Gospel Covenant has *no Conditions*, but is an absolute Promise. *A new Covenant will I make with the House of Israel.---I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, and will be their God, &c.* Jer. 31. 32. Exek. 36.

C. And must one or two prophetic Texts be perpetually wrested to serve so bad an Office as overthrowing the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. If God has promised to recall the House of *Israel*, and to make a better Covenant with them than the *Mosaick*, and predicted their Conversion and Reformation at a proper Time; is this any Contradiction to the whole New Testament, and must it be employed by Christian Divines to subvert every Sermon of their Master, and every Letter the great Bishop sent from Heaven; which all agree with the Epistles of St. *Paul*, *Peter*, *John* and *Jude* in making Repentance, Obedience, Victory, Continuance in well-doing the Condition of Salvation. Does the Gospel give the least Ground of Hope to any but such as do Christ's Commands? Your Doctrine makes the Way to Heaven easier than the Church of *Rome* has made it; and is ten thousand Times more dangerous to Souls than the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. But the Secret is, these absolute Promises belong only to the *Elect*; and that no Man can know he is elected, till he has a new Heart and leads a new Life; that is, till he has what is promised: So that they are Promises that no Man in the World can lay claim to, or be made better by. He knows of *no Right* he has to them till made good; and when made good to him, he *needs them not*.

B. Our Ministers recommend Holiness as much as any Men.

C. They do it then as you can't but see, in contradiction to their own Principles; but they are so us'd to Contradictions, that they see not the ^{most} glaring ones. But can they recommend Holiness,

liness, and yet disclaim all personal Righteousness? Can they recommend Holiness, and yet cry down good Works? Is not Holiness the Imitation of God and Christ in Justice, Kindness and doing Good? Can they recommend Holiness to Men who they know cannot become holy till God make them so by irresistible Grace, and he has decreed that Grace only for a very few. I wish your Preachers wou'd return to their Looms and Awls, and let preaching alone, unless they were better qualified for it.

B. I can't but think them very fine Preachers; I have often experienced great good under their Ministry, they have often ravished my Heart by their fervent way of Preaching and Praying.

C. Some People easily mistake twistings of Body, writhings of Face, and heat of the Brain in the *Preacher* for Christian Zeal; and think *themselves* edified, and their Hearts mended, when their Imagination only is fired by a set of strange Phrases, melodious Tones, and Rapsodies of Words. The best Experience a Man can have that Preaching has done him Good is, when God has hereby wrought him up to a Resolution to leave his Sins, and powerfully inclines him to live better. All *Experiences* without this, I am apt to think are Imagination and Delusion.

B. After all you have said, I can't but think our Minister comes very seasonably to Town to stop the Flood of Error breaking in upon us.

C. I am sorry we differ so widely in our way of Thinking; for I am led to reason thus, when God sends Men to preach Truth and spread Light, Men as blind as they are bold, rise up to
stop

stop its Progress; but who sends them, God knows. If your Ministers wou'd preach the plain Truths of the Gospel, tho' in ever so homely a Stile, I shou'd never be for their having any Disturbance, there are low sized People enough in Town whose Capacities are on a level with such low sized Preachers. But to come here with a Cargo of Nonsense, Error and Folly, to father all this upon the Spirit of Wisdom, Reason, Truth and Goodness; and to expect it shou'd go down with reasonable Men, is Presumption inexcusable.

B. In how bad a Light soever you place our Ministers, and their Sermons, God has owned them, given them success; several have been baptised into our Faith, and others, we hope, are coming over.

C. When the new Prophets begun their wild and barbarous Effusions, which they also fathered on the Spirit of God, they had strange success; but that *God gave it*, I think you have more Sense and Grace than to affirm. A considerable Part of the Dissenters in Town have been long in a vein of Enthusiasm; so that any vain Pretenders to the Spirit, under a Mask of Zeal and Rapture, have easily gained Profelytes among them. But Conversion to a set of Notions, to high Calvinism, to Antinomianism, to the Peculiarities of the Baptists, is far wide of Conversion to a Christian Temper and a Christian Life.

B. If they are brought over to a better Notion of Baptism, and are baptized in the Way which Christ appointed, and the Apostles practised; I hope this is something that deserves Regard.

C. I must confess, that the Controversy about the *Time* and *Mode* of Baptism appears to me of no great Moment; seeing *Baptism* itself is an outward Ordinance, or a meer Ceremony, tho' of Christ's Institution. Nor is it mention'd in the Commission given to St. *Paul*, who was the Apostle of the *Gentiles*. However, I allow that if Baptism with Water be *efficacious*, and does operate to the purifying of the Conscience and Cleansing of the Heart, then the *more Water* the better; and plunging a Knave, a Thief, a Scold, a lewd Woman over Head and Ears might make on them a more thorough Change. But if Baptism be only *Declarative* and *Significative*, then a Handful of Water poured or sprinkled on the Face (the chief Part of the Body, and the Seat of the Soul) may answer this Purpose as well, if a serious Profession of Christianity go along with it; as well as sprinkling the whole Congregation of *Israel*. *Exod. xxiv.* Or as well as Eating one Morfel of Bread, and Tasting the Wine, may signify and declare a Person's Faith in the Death and the second coming of Christ to as good Purpose as Eating a Meal, or Drinking a full Cup in Remembrance of him.

* the 12 pillars
A served instead
of sprinkling of
whole etc

And if there be the Answer of a good Conscience, or a sincere Profession of Christianity, and a hearty Resolution to serve Christ, which is the *Moral* or *Spiritual* part of Baptism; I do not think our Lord and Master will be so Scrupulous as some of his Disciples are about the *Mode*.

If washing the *Principal Part* instead of the whole, be a *more safe* way for Health; and a more *Decent* way upon the Rules of Chastity,

I think it is the *better Way*: And that there is Room to apply that sacred Proverb which our Lord applieth on another Occasion, *God will have Mercy, not Sacrifice*, for he always prefers *Morals* to *Rituals*. And if St. Paul made so little Account of the External Part of Baptism, 1 Cor. i. 13----17. What wou'd he have said, to a Controversy about the *Mode* of using it.

As to TIME; it is certainly very proper that Parents devote their Children to God, in a solemn Manner, acknowledge him as their Creator and Preserver, and pray for his continued Care; that they enter them as Infant Disciples in the School of Christ, in order to become his actual Scholars as soon as capable; And is it not as proper that this be done by the visible Ceremony of Baptism, as for the Jewish Children to be enter'd into their Church by Circumcision? And if Parents make a Profession of the Christian Faith at the Baptism of their Children, and also enter into publick Engagements to give them a Christian Education, are not *as good Ends* as to practical Religion answered by the Baptism of Christian's Children, as by the Baptism of adult Persons. In this latter Case, it is not the Washing of the Body in Water whether a Part of it or the whole, that has any Virtue in it, to render a Person one jot holier than before: But it is the Unfeigned, Conscientious Profession of the Christian Faith, and Resolution to live a Christian Life which God accepts in Baptism; and it is not a plunge in Water, by what ever Hand perform'd, which will secure a Person from Temptation and Sin in future Life; but it is a publick, deliberate,
serious

serious Promise and Vow, made before God and the Church, that is likely to be a Means of guarding the Baptized Party from Apostacy in future Life.

Penitent Confession of Sin, Profession of Faith in Christ, and Engagement to a new Life were the Conditions of Baptism to all *Jews* and *Gentiles*; Baptism was only a *publick Sign* of all this, to signify it to the World, and to make the stronger Impression on themselves: Now if Persons do become truly Penitent, believe the Gospel and live a new Life, it is a small Matter either *when* or *how*, or *by whom* they were baptized. But the *Temper* and *Spirit* of these New, or as you call them, the *Particular Baptists*, is what I most of all disapprove: They lay so great Weight on their own peculiar Opinions and Practises, and are so intolerably Censorious of and Uncharitable towards all who do not think as they do, that I can't but Judge they are very degenerate Christians, and have departed very far from the wise, the mild, the friendly Spirit of the Gospel.

B. I agree with you, in wishing a little more Moderation in some of our Preachers; and more of the Spirit of Candor and Love amongst all good Christians. Yet you may think worse of us than we deserve; for if Men be Zealous in any Cause, shou'd it not be for the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*?

C. *Sacred Zeal* is rational, mild, calm, candid, charitable; it lies in steddiness of Mind and Heart to what is good. The Zeal of your Preachers, I fear, is a *blind Zeal*, founded in Ignorance, little and partial Reading; a *bodily Zeal*, consisting in the the Agitation of the Animal Spirits, in a fiery Temper, and passionate Language; and a bold, *immodest Zeal*, using the greatest Confidence in the most dark and disputed Points.

Sacred Zeal will be employed chiefly for Doctrines and Laws unquestionably Scriptural, and which all Christians agree are so. But the Zeal of your Preachers is chiefly employ'd about the anti-scriptural and irrational Doctrines, of three Persons equal to one

another, yet each supreme, and all together making but one supreme God. Of God's electing and justifying from Eternity a few Persons absolutely, without any Reason at all, or without any regard to their Behaviour and Moral Character, and reprobating, or decreeing to damn the greatest Part of Mankind for what they cou'd not help.—A partial Redemption;—an unconditional Gospel Covenant;—irresistible Grace in Conversion;—God's seeing no Sin in his own People;—the Impossibility of a righteous Man's turning from his Righteousness, and Dying in his Iniquity, &c. Doctrines, which if *as true*, as they are false; as *safe*, as they are dangerous; as *useful*, as they are hurtful; as *lovely*, as they are hateful; and as *honourable* to God, as they are dishonourable; yet why must all who believe not these strange Doctrines, be treated as Hereticks, unsound Men, and be shut out from Salvation. If I had no other Objection against these New, Antinomian Baptists, than this Anti-christian Spirit of theirs, it is a sufficient one: For I may add, that *Sacred Zeal* is a charitable Zeal; whereas the Zeal of your Preachers appears to me a rash and bitter Zeal; and which tends to inspire the People with narrow Principles, Bigottry, Ill-will to Mankind, a Schismatical Temper, and intolerable Conceitedness, as if none were to be saved, and were elected but a few whimsical Baptists. 4 GC 58

B. You grow warm, Friend, and carry your own Zeal too far, and too forward and keen in your Censures of our Ministers and People.

C. I have endeavour'd to represent them in a just Light; and think, I have not wronged them: But it is enough to inspire any Christian Breast with Warmth and Indignation too, to see Men set up for the only *Gospel-Preachers*, while they deliver Doctrines so opposite to Religion and Subversive of that Gospel they pretend to Preach.

B. I hope you will come to have a better Opinion of our Preachers and People.

C. I wish I was able. Farewell.

The END of the First Part.